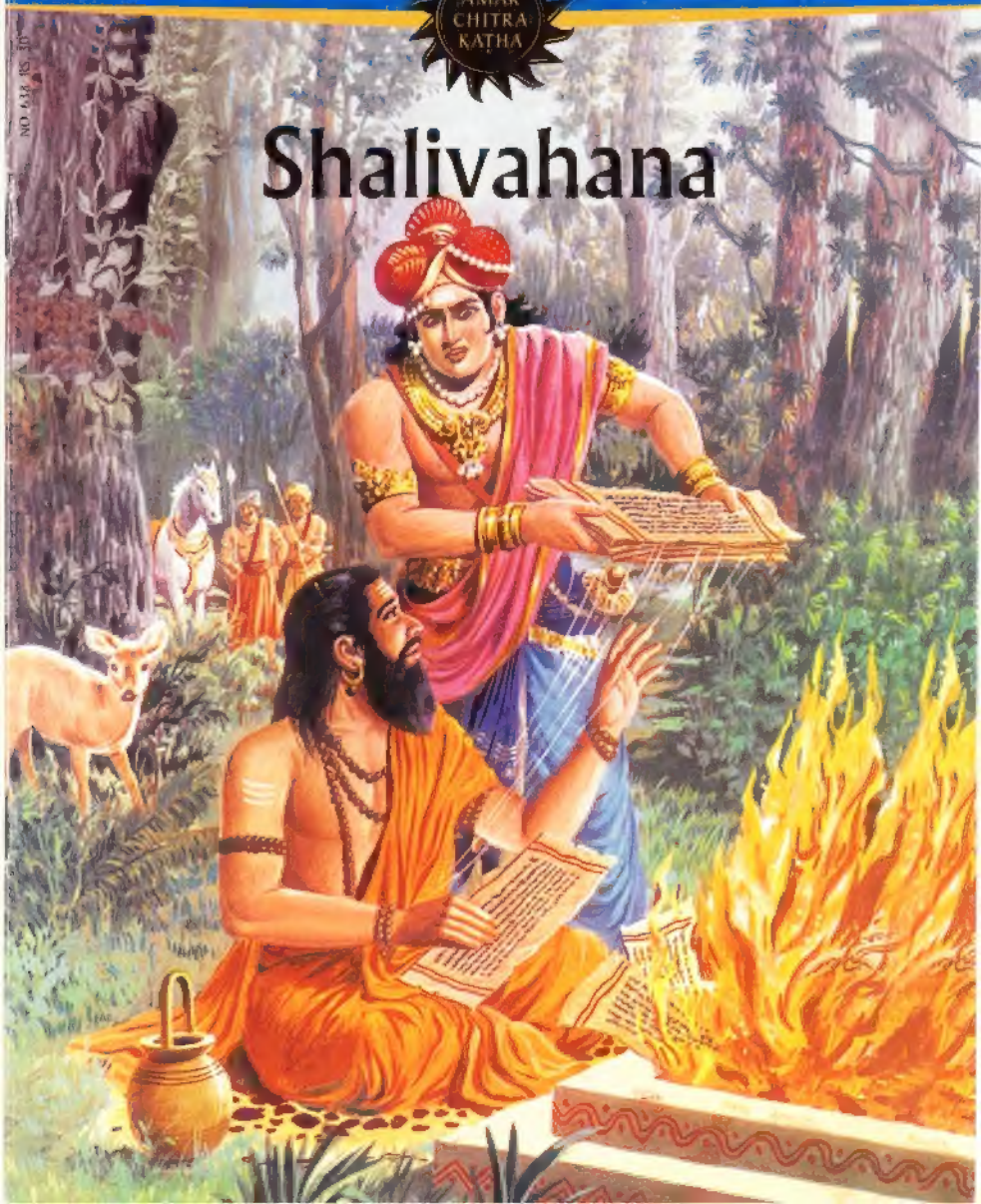
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

Shalivahana



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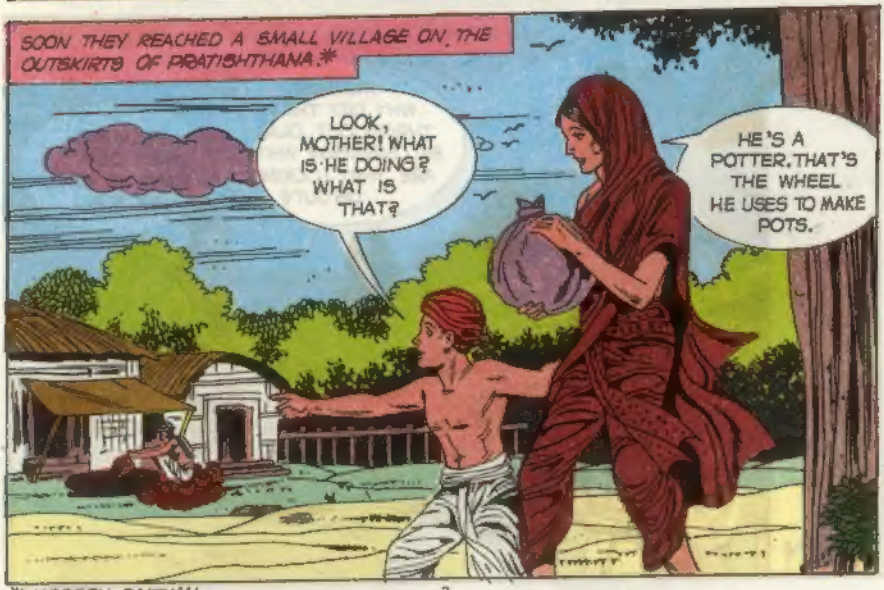
SHALIVAHANA

SOON AFTER HER HUSBAND'S DEATH, GAUTAMI AND HER SON, SHATAKARNI, WERE TURNED OUT OF THEIR HOME BY HER BROTHERS.

MOTHER, WHY DID THEY THROW OUT OUR BELONGINGS? WHY ARE THEY LOCKING US OUT?

BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT US HERE, MY SON.



* MODERN PAITHAN

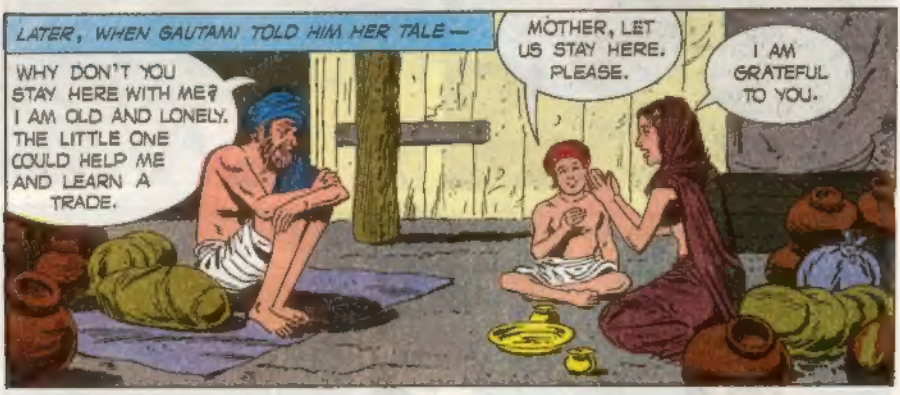
SHATAKARNI RAN TO THE POTTER.
WILL YOU TEACH ME HOW TO DO THAT, GRANDFATHER?

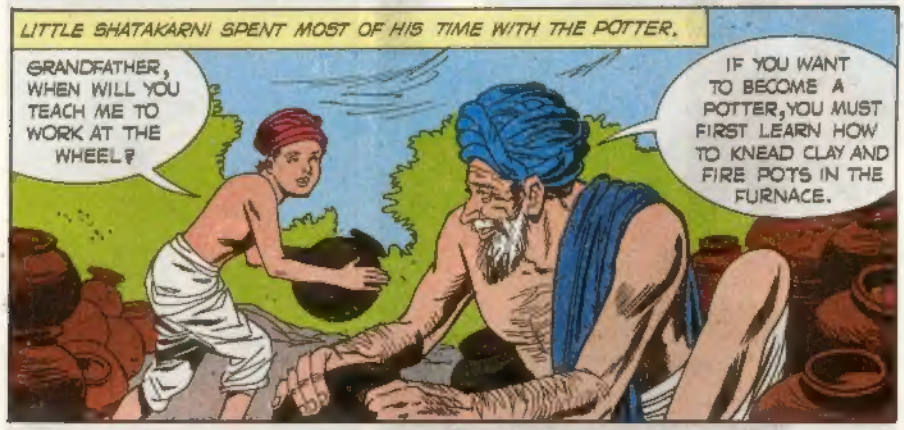
THE OLD POTTER IMMEDIATELY TOOK TO THE ENDEARING CHILD.
CERTAINLY I WILL! MY FINGERS ARE NOT WHAT THEY USED TO BE, THOUGH.

SHATAKARNI! DON'T DISTURB HIM AT HIS WORK. COME AWAY.
LET HIM BE. HE IS A DELIGHTFUL CHILD.

MY DEAR, YOU LOOK ILL AND TIRED! WHY DON'T YOU COME INSIDE AND REST FOR A WHILE?

HIS KINDNESS AND CONCERN WERE TOO MUCH FOR GAUTAMI AFTER THE HARSHNESS OF HER OWN KIN. SHE BROKE DOWN.
NOW, NOW. DON'T WEEP. COME IN AND TELL ME WHAT THE MATTER IS. PERHAPS I CAN HELP YOU.


LATER, WHEN GAUTAMI TOLD HIM HER TALE —
WHY DON'T YOU STAY HERE WITH ME? I AM OLD AND LONELY. THE LITTLE ONE COULD HELP ME AND LEARN A TRADE.
MOTHER, LET US STAY HERE. PLEASE.
I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU.


LITTLE SHATAKARNI SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME WITH THE POTTER.
GRANDFATHER, WHEN WILL YOU TEACH ME TO WORK AT THE WHEEL?
IF YOU WANT TO BECOME A POTTER, YOU MUST FIRST LEARN HOW TO KNEAD CLAY AND FIRE POTS IN THE FURNACE.

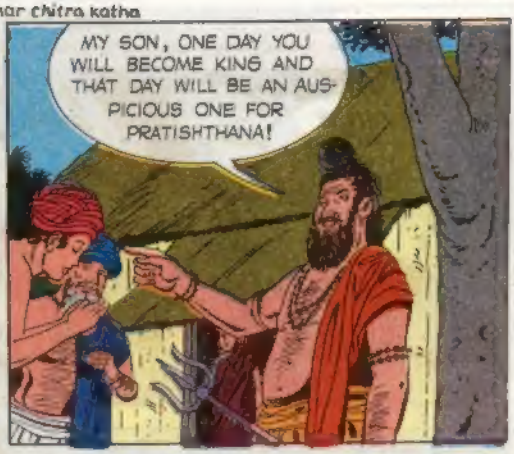
ONE HOT DAY, A WANDERING SADHU STOPPED AT THE POTTER'S HUT.
SON, MAY I HAVE SOME WATER TO DRINK?
IN A MOMENT, HOLY ONE!

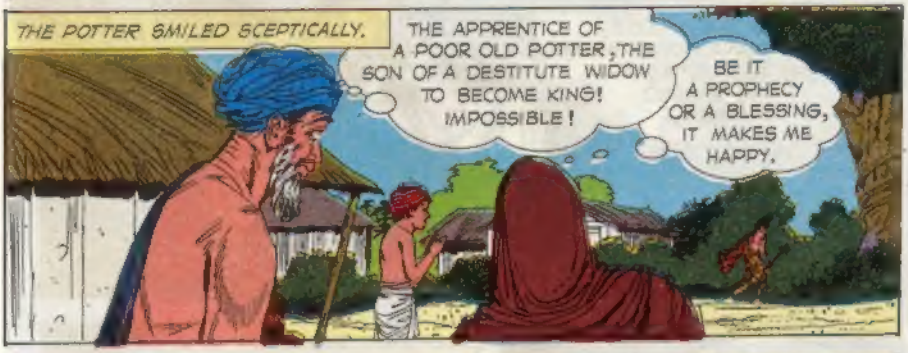
WHILE SHATAKARNI WENT INTO THE HUT—
BUT FOR THE DACOITS, PRATISHTHANA WOULD BE ONE OF THE BEST CITIES THAT I HAVE PASSED THROUGH.

I KNOW. IT'S A SHAME. I'VE SEEN MANY SEASONS; BUT THE CITY HAS NOT YET SEEN A SOUL VALIANT ENOUGH TO FIGHT AND VANQUISH THE DACOITS.

JUST THEN SHATAKARNI CAME UP WITH SOME WATER.
QUENCH YOUR THIRST, HOLY ONE!

WHY DO YOU LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT, HOLY ONE?


MY SON, ONE DAY YOU WILL BECOME KING AND THAT DAY WILL BE AN AUSPICIOUS ONE FOR PRATISHTHANA!


THE POTTER SMILED SCEPTICALLY.
THE APPRENTICE OF A POOR OLD POTTER, THE SON OF A DESTITUTE WIDOW TO BECOME KING! IMPOSSIBLE!
BE IT A PROPHECY OR A BLESSING, IT MAKES ME HAPPY.

BUT LITTLE SHATAKARNI TOOK THE SADHU'S WORDS SERIOUSLY.
IF I AM TO BE KING, I MUST HAVE AN ARMY OF SOLDIERS, CHARIOTS HORSES AND ELEPHANTS!

AND SHATAKARNI BEGAN TO SHAPE HIS ARMY OF CLAY FIGURES.
AH! THESE ARE READY. WHILE THEY DRY IN THE SUN, I'LL COLLECT BITS OF DRY WOOD AND TWIGS.

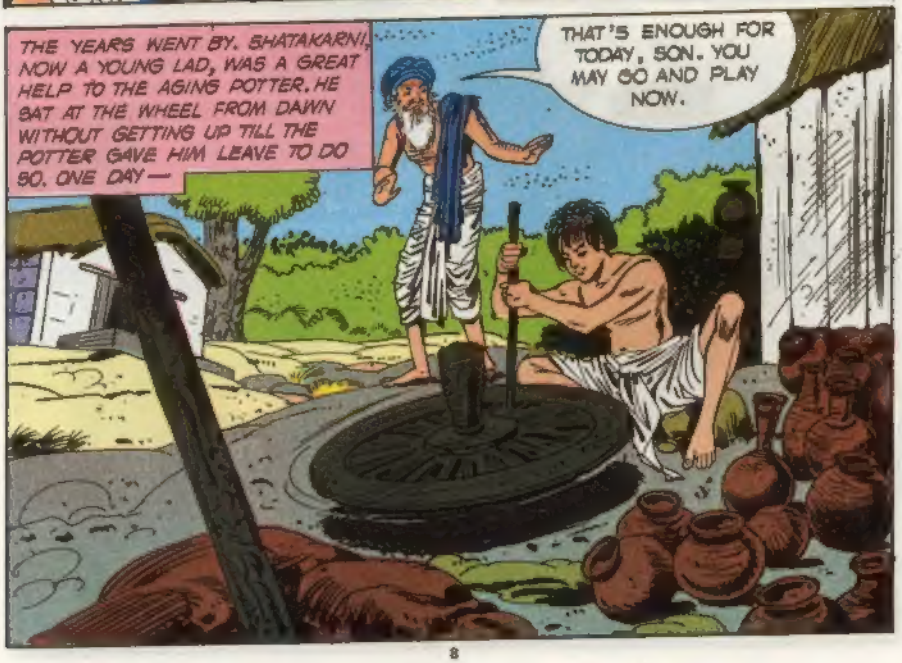
AFTER DRYING THEM IN THE SUN, HE BAKED THEM IN THE FURNACE USING THE WOOD AND TWIGS FOR FUEL. THE POTTER WATCHED HIM PROUDLY.
HOW PERFECT THE IMAGES ARE! THE BOY CERTAINLY HAS DEFT FINGERS!

SHATAKARNI THEN TOOK OUT THE BAKED TERRA-COTTA IMAGES...

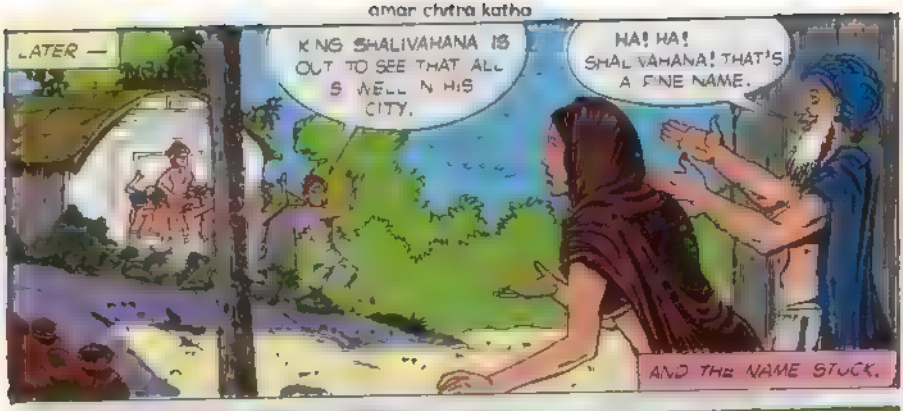
...AND THREW THEM INTO A WELL IN THE BACKYARD. HE DID THIS SEVERAL TIMES, MUCH TO THE BAFFLEMENT OF THE POTTER. ONE DAY —
SON, WHY DO YOU THROW THOSE LOVELY TOYS INTO THE WELL? WHY DON'T YOU PLAY WITH THEM?

THEY ARE NOT TOYS, GRANDFATHER. THEY ARE THE SOLDIERS, CHARIOTS AND ANIMALS THAT I'M GOING TO NEED WHEN I BECOME KING. I'M PRESERVING THEM HERE TILL THEN.
THE CHILD HAS TAKEN THE SADHU'S WORDS SERIOUSLY!

BUT WHEN THE POTTER SAW THE EARNESTNESS AND SIMPLE FAITH OF THE CHILD, HE HID THE SMILE THAT CAME TO HIS LIPS AND SWALLOWED THE WORDS THAT ALMOST TUMBLED OUT. INSTEAD—
TRUE, MY SON. YOU ARE GOING TO NEED THEM. AND WHAT BETTER PLACE, TO PRESERVE THEM IN, THAN THIS WELL!


THE YEARS WENT BY. SHATAKARNI, NOW A YOUNG LAD, WAS A GREAT HELP TO THE AGING POTTER. HE SAT AT THE WHEEL FROM DAWN WITHOUT GETTING UP TILL THE POTTER GAVE HIM LEAVE TO DO SO. ONE DAY—
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY, SON. YOU MAY GO AND PLAY NOW.

* VEHICLE 卐 ONE WHO HAS A SHALI TREE AS A VAHANA

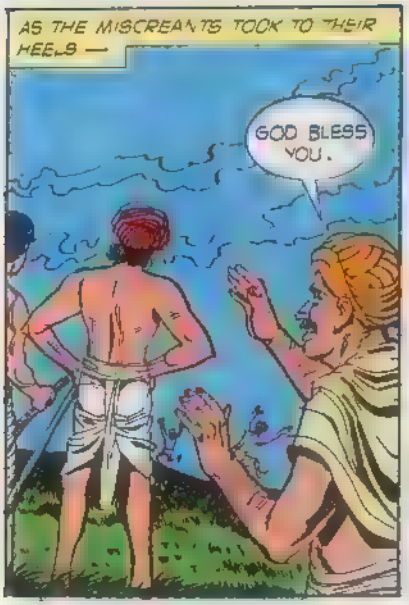

LATER —
KING SHALIVAHANA IS OUT TO SEE THAT ALL IS WELL IN HIS CITY.
HA! HA! SHALIVAHANA! THAT'S A FINE NAME.
AND THE NAME STUCK.

AS SHALIVAHANA GREW OLDER, HIS LEISURE HOURS WERE SPENT WITH HIS COMPANIONS IN THE BUSY STREETS OF PRATISHTHANA ONE SUCH EVENING —
SH! WAIT! THOSE MEN LOOK SUSPICIOUS. LET'S GO CLOSER AND LISTEN TO WHAT THEY'RE SAYING.

AS THEY DREW NEARER —
THE MERCHANT, SUVARNA'S CARAVAN LEAVES TONIGHT! AND LOADED TOO!
THEY'RE DACOITS!
SEND WORD TO THE OTHERS TO GET READY FOR THE LOOT.

THAT NIGHT, AS THE DACOITS ATTACKED THE MERCHANT'S CARAVAN...
LEAVE HIM ALONE!

IT WAS SHALIVAHANA AND HIS FRIENDS. THEY BEAT UP THE DACOITS.


AS THE MISCREANTS TOOK TO THEIR HEELS —
GOD BLESS YOU.

LATER, AT THE DACOITS' HIDEOUT—
WE MUST TEACH THAT BUSYBODY, SHALIVAHANA, A LESSON. HE IS THE LEADER.
WE MUST GET RID OF HIM. IT WON'T BE DIFFICULT.

ONE EVENING, AS SHALIVAHANA AND HIS FRIENDS WERE RETURNING HOME —

IT'S THOSE DACOITS!

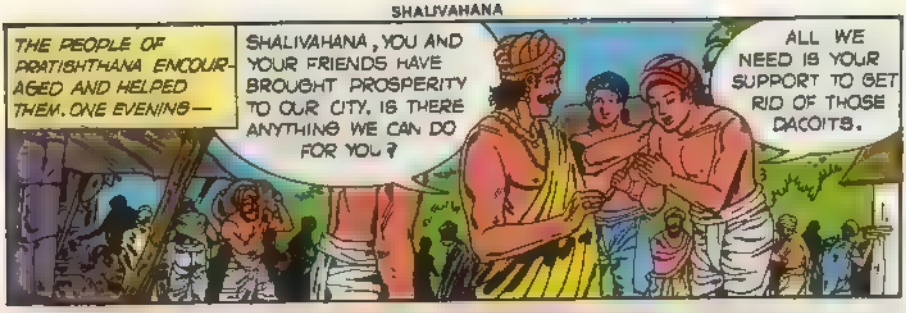
THEY HAVE DAGGERS AND KNIVES!

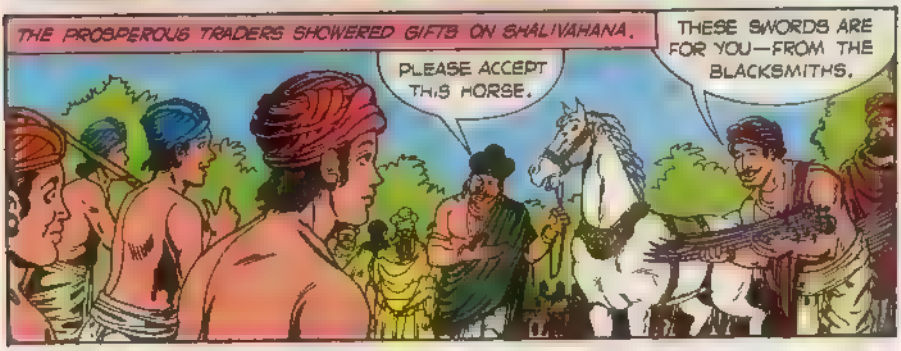
SHALIVAHANA AND HIS FRIENDS HOWEVER DID NOT FLINCH THEY FOUGHT BRAVELY.

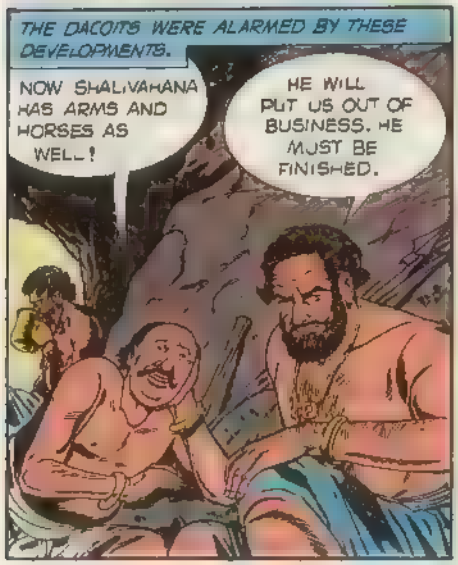
SOON —

WE UNDERESTIMATED THEM! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

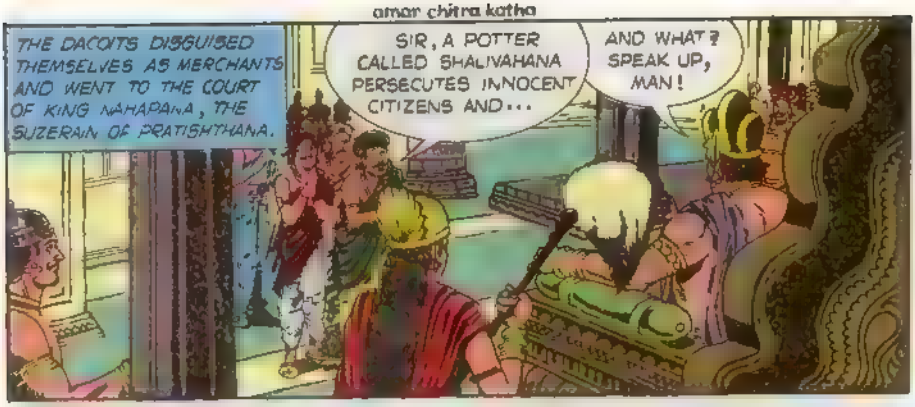
AFTER THIS INCIDENT, SHALIVAHANA ARMED HIMSELF AND HIS FRIENDS WITH SWORDS, SPEARS AND DAGGERS. HE ORGANISED A REGULAR PATROL TO KEEP PRATISHTHANA SAFE AND PEACEFUL.


THE PEOPLE OF PRATISHTHANA ENCOURAGED AND HELPED THEM. ONE EVENING—
SHALIVAHANA, YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS HAVE BROUGHT PROSPERITY TO OUR CITY. IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO FOR YOU?
ALL WE NEED IS YOUR SUPPORT TO GET RID OF THOSE DACOITS.


THE PROSPEROUS TRADERS SHOWERED GIFTS ON SHALIVAHANA.
PLEASE ACCEPT THIS HORSE.
THESE SWORDS ARE FOR YOU—FROM THE BLACKSMITHS.

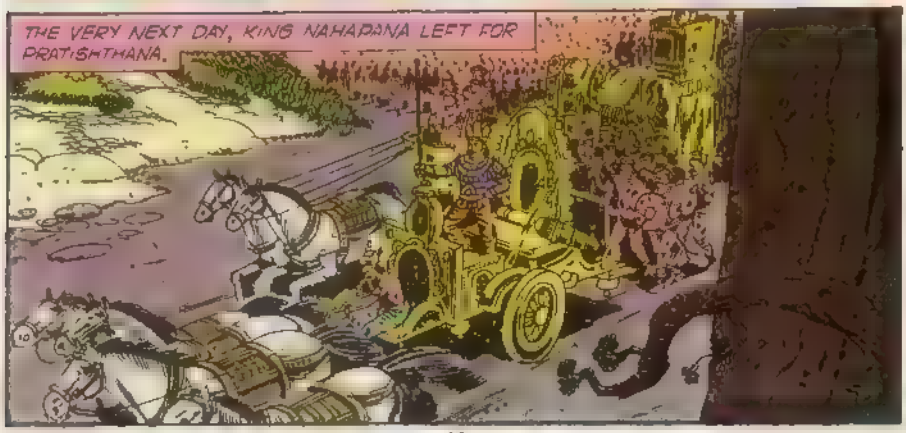

THE DACOITS WERE ALARMED BY THESE DEVELOPMENTS.
NOW SHALIVAHANA HAS ARMS AND HORSES AS WELL!
HE WILL PUT US OUT OF BUSINESS. HE MUST BE FINISHED.

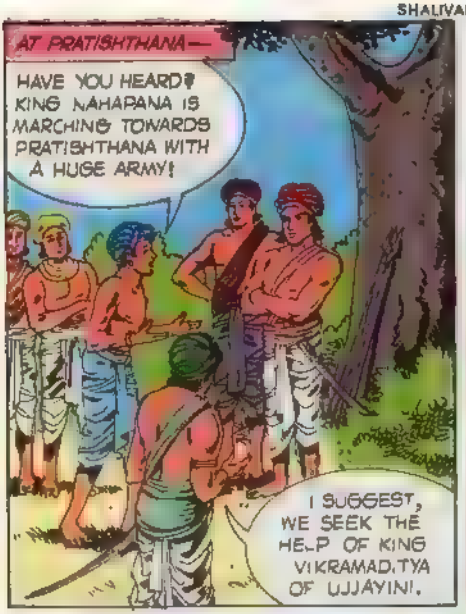
BUT HOW? HE IS STRONGER THAN WE ARE.
NOT CLEVERER, THOUGH!

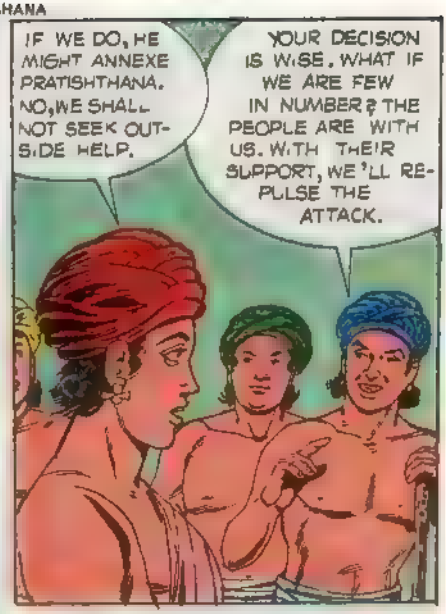

THE DACOITS DISGUISED THEMSELVES AS MERCHANTS AND WENT TO THE COURT OF KING NAHAPANA, THE SUZERAIN OF PRATISHTHANA.
SIR, A POTTER CALLED SHALIVAHANA PERSECUTES INNOCENT CITIZENS AND...
AND WHAT? SPEAK UP, MAN!

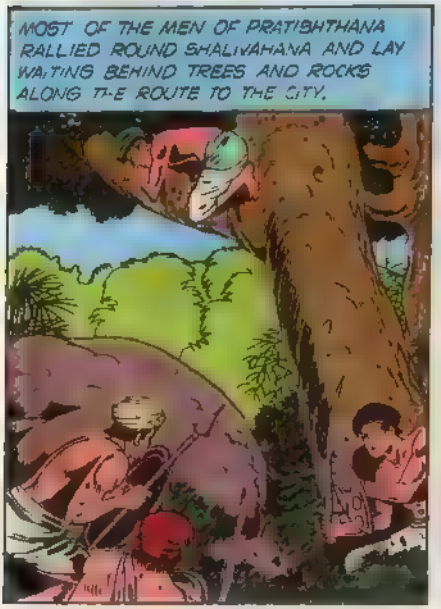
PARDON US, SIR. HE SAYS, HE WILL SOON DETHRONE YOU.

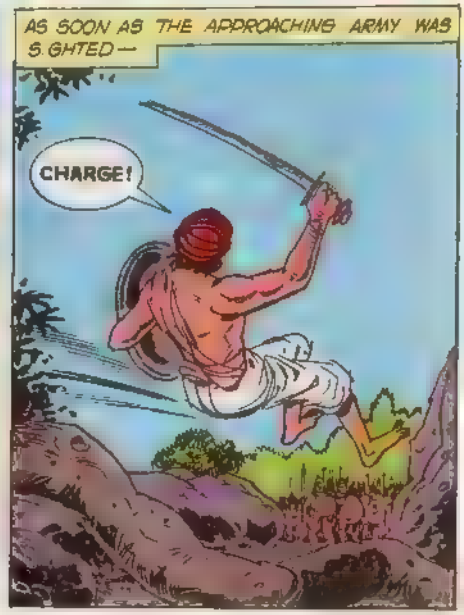
HE WILL, WILL HE? THE IMPUDENT POTTER!

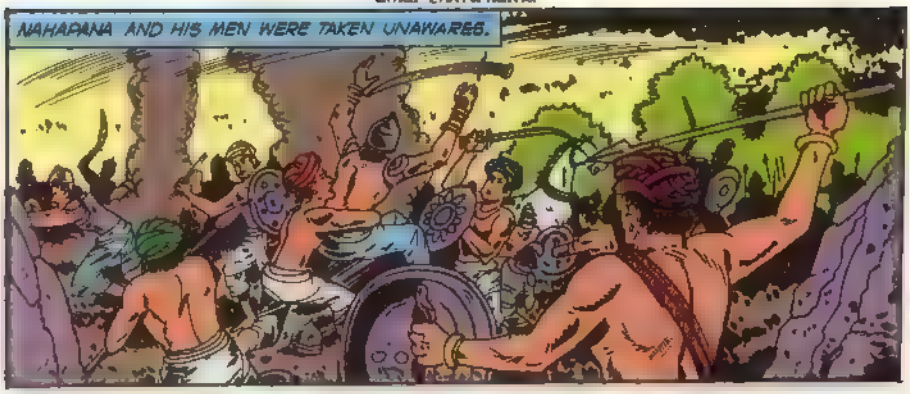

THE VERY NEXT DAY, KING NAHAPANA LEFT FOR PRATISHTHANA.

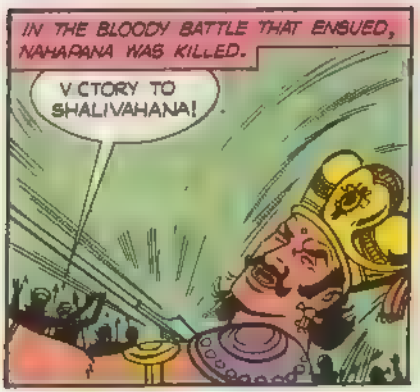

AT PRATISHTHANA—
HAVE YOU HEARD? KING NAHAPANA IS MARCHING TOWARDS PRATISHTHANA WITH A HUGE ARMY!
I SUGGEST, WE SEEK THE HELP OF KING VIKRAMADITYA OF UJJAYINI.

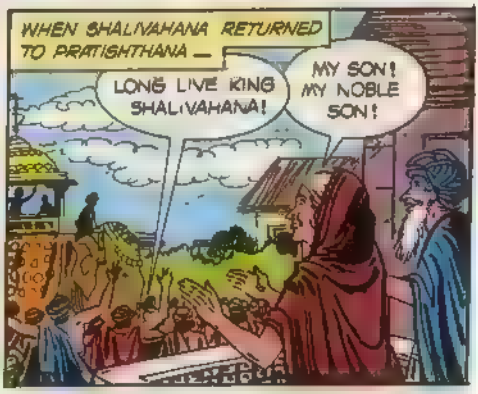

IF WE DO, HE MIGHT ANNEXE PRATISHTHANA. NO, WE SHALL NOT SEEK OUTSIDE HELP.
YOUR DECISION IS WISE. WHAT IF WE ARE FEW IN NUMBER? THE PEOPLE ARE WITH US. WITH THEIR SUPPORT, WE'LL REPULSE THE ATTACK.

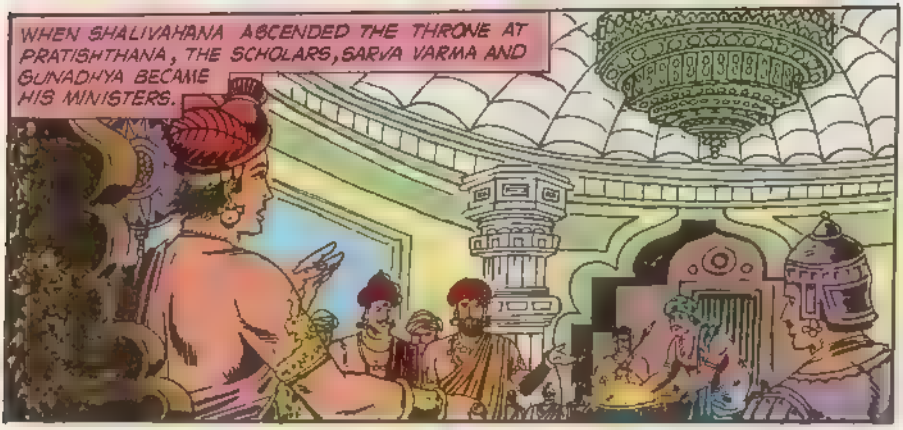

MOST OF THE MEN OF PRATISHTHANA RALLIED ROUND SHALIVAHANA AND LAY WAITING BEHIND TREES AND ROCKS ALONG THE ROUTE TO THE CITY.

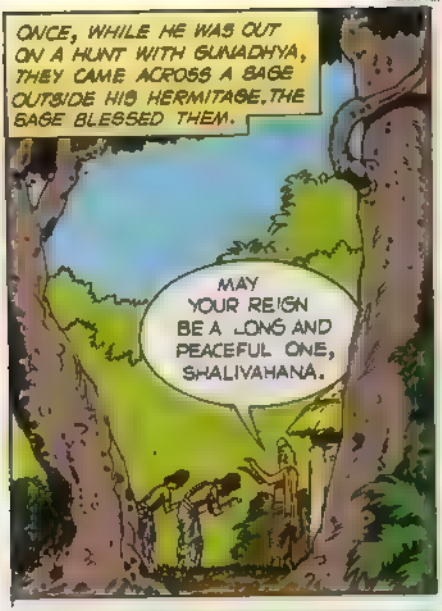

AS SOON AS THE APPROACHING ARMY WAS SIGHTED—
CHARGE!


NAHAPANA AND HIS MEN WERE TAKEN UNAWARES.


IN THE BLOODY BATTLE THAT ENSUED, NAHAPANA WAS KILLED.
VICTORY TO SHALIVAHANA!


WHEN SHALIVAHANA RETURNED TO PRATISHTHANA —
LONG LIVE KING SHALIVAHANA!
MY SON! MY NOBLE SON!


WHEN SHALIVAHANA ASCENDED THE THRONE AT PRATISHTHANA, THE SCHOLARS, SARVA VARMA AND GUNADHYA BECAME HIS MINISTERS.


ONCE, WHILE HE WAS OUT ON A HUNT WITH GUNADHYA, THEY CAME ACROSS A SAGE OUTSIDE HIS HERMITAGE. THE SAGE BLESSED THEM.
MAY YOUR REIGN BE A LONG AND PEACEFUL ONE, SHALIVAHANA.

HE THEN TOOK THEM INTO HIS HUT.
WHAT A RADIANT FACE SHE HAS! HER EYES SHINE WITH INTELLIGENCE!

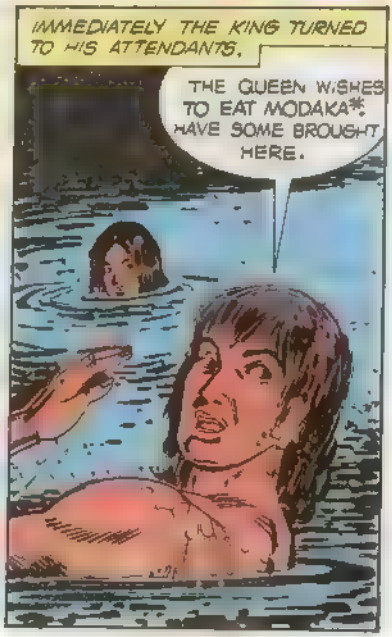
WHO IS SHE, REVERED ONE?
SHE IS MY DISCIPLE. HER NAME IS NAGANIKA. SHE IS THE DAUGHTER OF A NAGA CHIEF. AN EXCEPTIONALLY CLEVER GIRL!

AS SHALIVAHANA RODE AWAY FROM THE HERMITAGE —

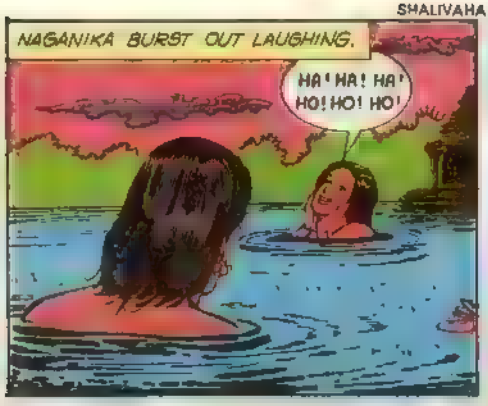
LATER AT THE PALACE —
I CAN'T GET THAT GIRL OUT OF MY MIND.
I'LL SPEAK TO HER FATHER. THE KINGDOM NEEDS A QUEEN.

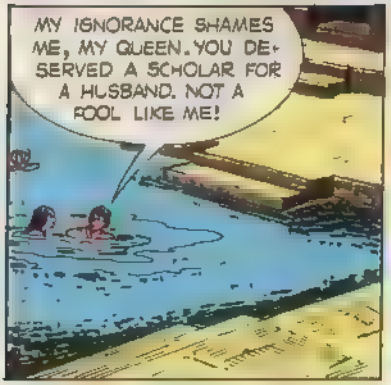
NAGANIKA'S FATHER READILY AGREED TO THE PROPOSAL, AND SHALIVAHANA AND NAGANIKA WERE MARRIED
WELCOME HOME, MY CHILDREN. MAY YOU ALWAYS BE PROSPEROUS AND ENJOY A LONG LIFE TOGETHER.

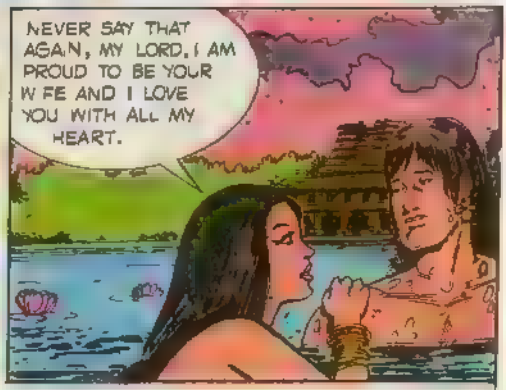
A FEW DAYS LATER, AS THE YOUNG COUPLE WERE BATHING IN THE PALACE
MODAKA...!

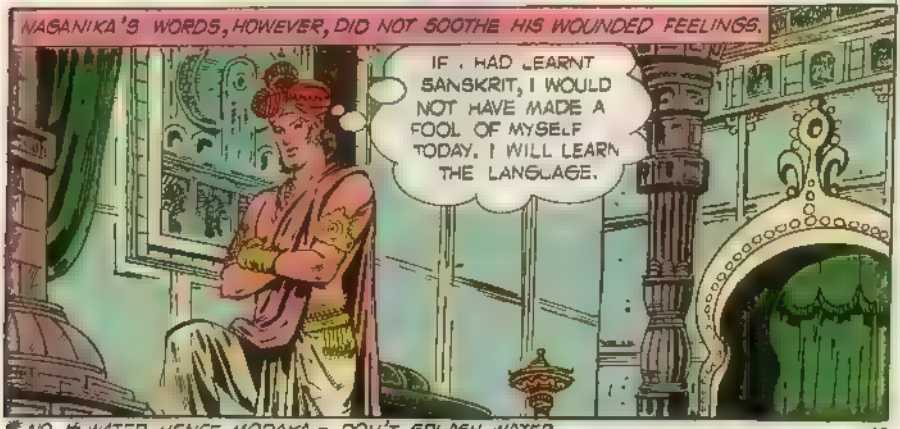

IMMEDIATELY THE KING TURNED TO HIS ATTENDANTS.
THE QUEEN WISHES TO EAT MODAKA*. HAVE SOME BROUGHT HERE.

* A SWEETMEAT

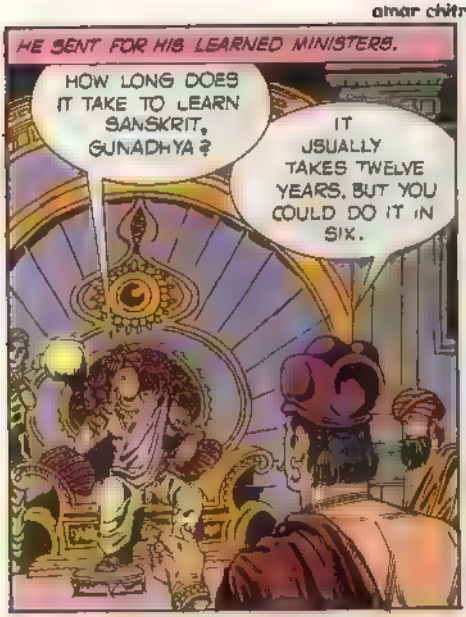




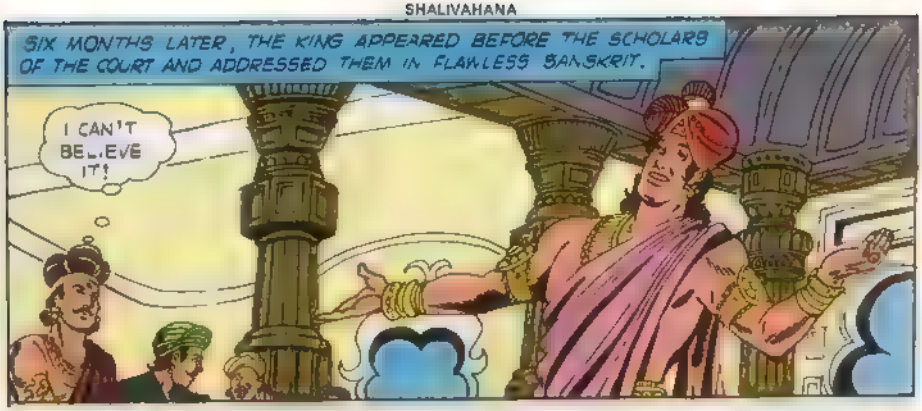




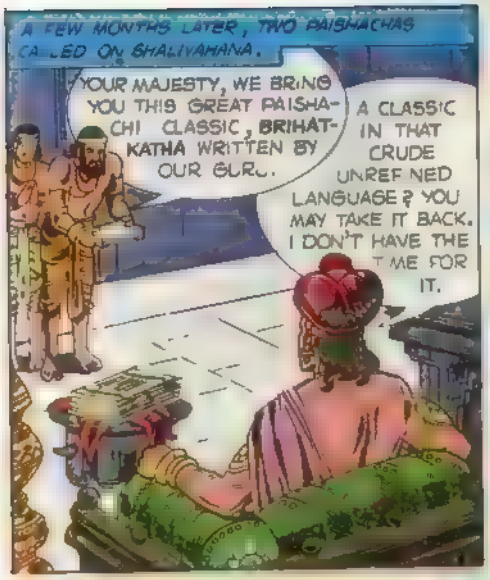
* NO ✓ WATER HENCE MODAKA = DON'T SPLASH WATER.



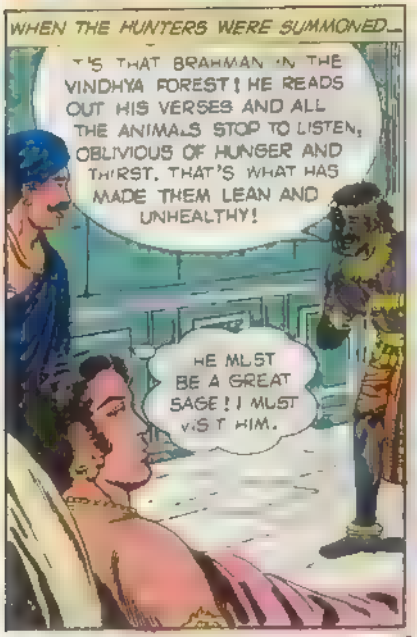
* THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE OF THOSE DAYS



* THE LANGUAGE OF THE PAISHACHA TRIBE

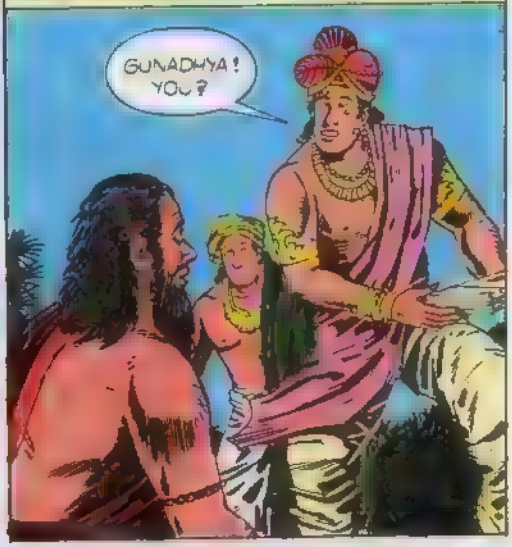

A FEW MONTHS LATER, TWO PAISHACHAS CALLED ON SHALIVAHANA.
YOUR MAJESTY, WE BRING YOU THIS GREAT PAISHACHI CLASSIC, BRIHATKATHA WRITTEN BY OUR GURU.
A CLASSIC IN THAT CRUDE UNREFINED LANGUAGE? YOU MAY TAKE IT BACK. I DON'T HAVE THE TIME FOR IT.

SOON AFTER, SHALIVAHANA FELL ILL. THE ROYAL PHYSICIAN SENT FOR THE COOK.
THE KING HAS BEEN EATING NEER OR MEAT.
WE COOK WHAT THE HUNTERS SUPPLY, SIR.


WHEN THE HUNTERS WERE SUMMONED...
IT'S THAT BRAHMAN IN THE VINDHYA FOREST! HE READS OUT HIS VERSES AND ALL THE ANIMALS STOP TO LISTEN, OBLIVIOUS OF HUNGER AND THIRST. THAT'S WHAT HAS MADE THEM LEAN AND UNHEALTHY!
HE MUST BE A GREAT SAGE! I MUST VISIT HIM.

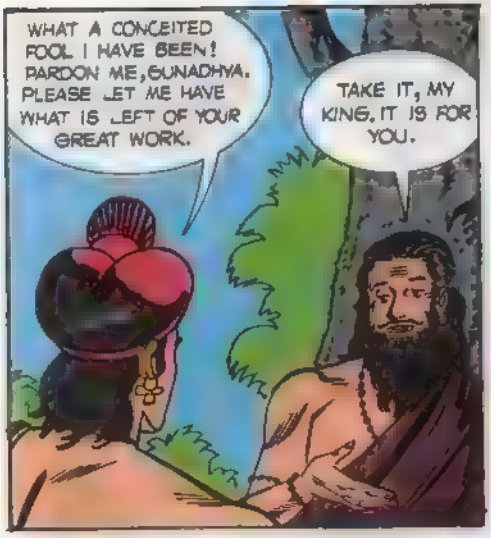
SHALIVAHANA WENT TO THE FOREST AS HE HEARD THE HERMIT RECITE HIS COMPOSITIONS—
WHY, I NEVER DREAMT THAT PAISHACHI COULD SOUND SO MUSICAL!

SUDDENLY—
HE'S THROWING THAT PALM LEAF INTO THE FIRE!
STOP!

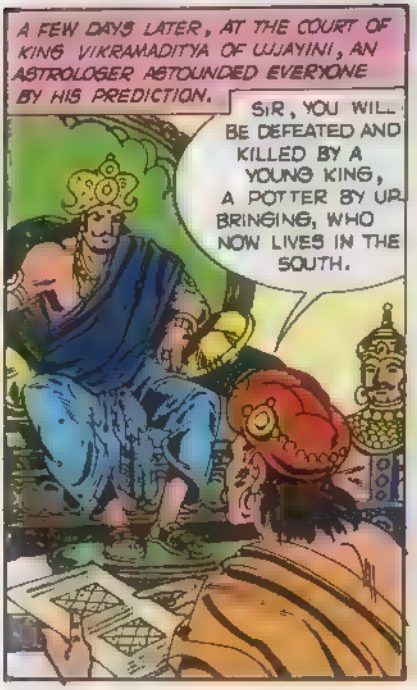

AS SHALIVAHANA RUSHED FORWARD TO WREST THE PALM LEAF MANUSCRIPT FROM THE HERMIT—
GUNADHYA! YOU?

GUNADHYA SMILED SADLY AND SPOKE TO SHALIVAHANA IN PAISHACHI.
YES, I LEARNT PAISHACHI HERE IN THE FOREST AND COMPOSED THE BRIHATKATHA FOR YOU.

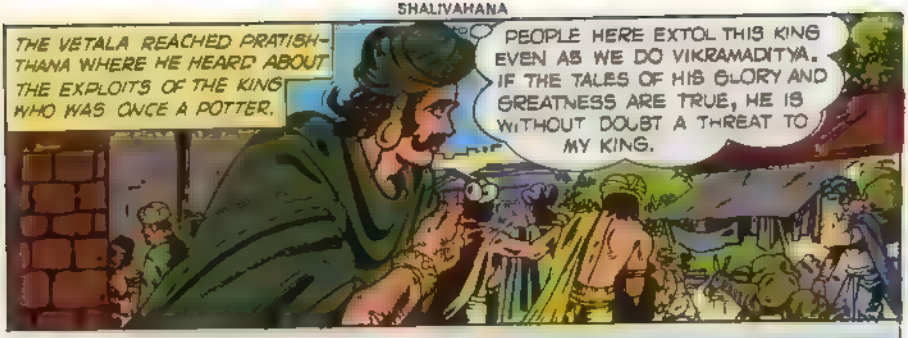
SADDENED BY YOUR REJECTION, I HAVE BEEN DESTROYING MY WORK.

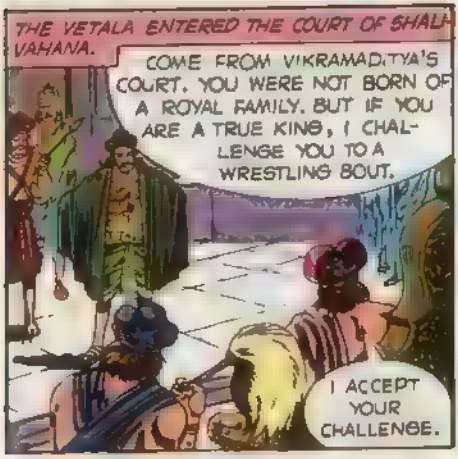

WHAT A CONCEITED FOOL I HAVE BEEN! PARDON ME, GUNADHYA. PLEASE LET ME HAVE WHAT IS LEFT OF YOUR GREAT WORK.
TAKE IT, MY KING. IT IS FOR YOU.

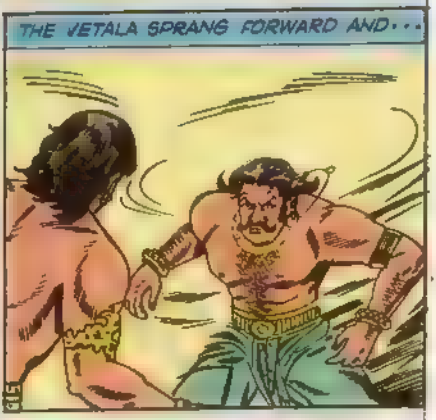
WHY DON'T YOU RETURN TO THE PALACE WITH ME, GUNADHYA?
NO, MY KING. I HAVE FULFILLED MY DESTINY. I WOULD NOW LIKE TO DEPART FROM THIS EARTH.
THE KING HAD TO RETURN TO THE CAPITAL ALONE.

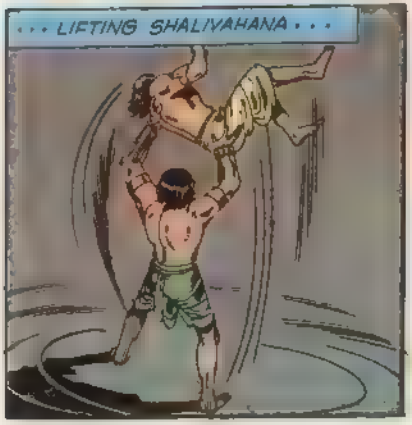

A FEW DAYS LATER, AT THE COURT OF KING VIKRAMADITYA OF UJJAYINI, AN ASTROLOGER ASTOUNDED EVERYONE BY HIS PREDICTION.
SIR, YOU WILL BE DEFEATED AND KILLED BY A YOUNG KING, A POTTER BY UPBRINGING, WHO NOW LIVES IN THE SOUTH.

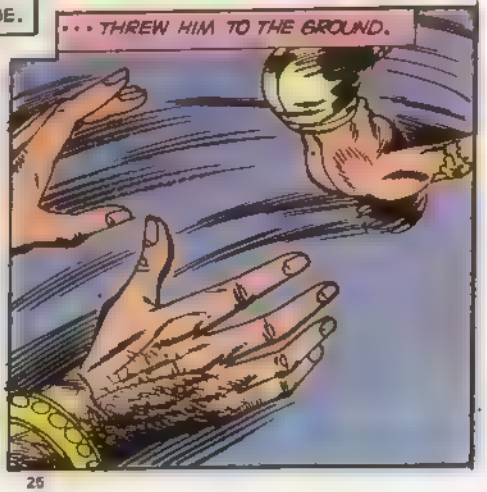
VIKRAMADITYA IMMEDIATELY SENT FOR HIS DEMON-SLAVE, A VETALA.
TRACK THAT MAN DOWN AND KILL HIM.
IT SHALL BE DONE, MY LORD.


THE VETALA REACHED PRATISHTHANA WHERE HE HEARD ABOUT THE EXPLOITS OF THE KING WHO WAS ONCE A POTTER.
PEOPLE HERE EXTOL THIS KING EVEN AS WE DO VIKRAMADITYA. IF THE TALES OF HIS GLORY AND GREATNESS ARE TRUE, HE IS WITHOUT DOUBT A THREAT TO MY KING.

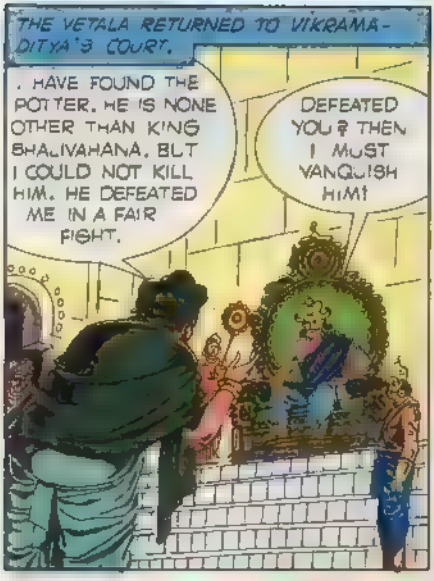

THE VETALA ENTERED THE COURT OF SHALIVAHANA.
COME FROM VIKRAMADITYA'S COURT. YOU WERE NOT BORN OF A ROYAL FAMILY. BUT IF YOU ARE A TRUE KING, I CHALLENGE YOU TO A WRESTLING BOUT.
I ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE.


THE VETALA SPRANG FORWARD AND...

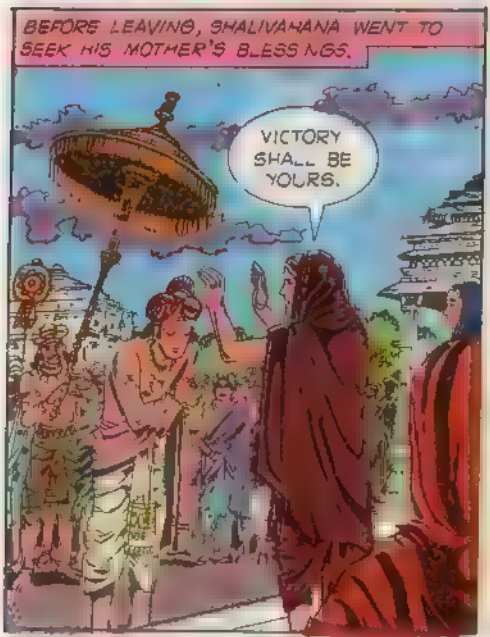

...LIFTING SHALIVAHANA...

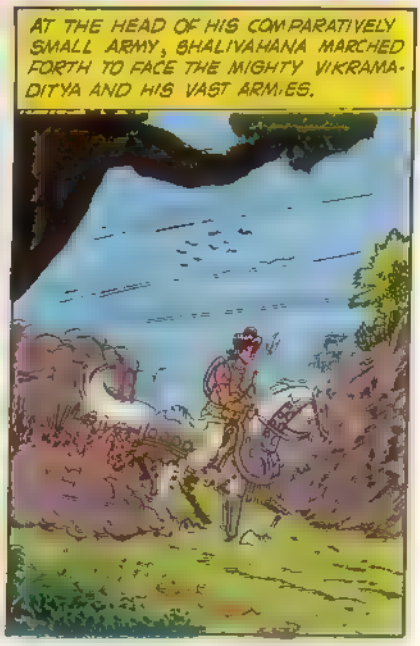

...THREW HIM TO THE GROUND.

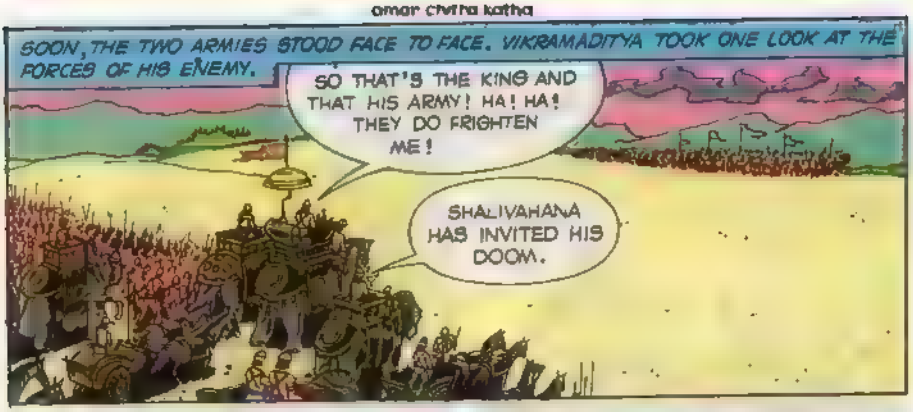
BUT SHALIVAHANA FELL ON HIS FEET AND QUICKLY ROSE UP TO FACE THE VETALA ONCE AGAIN.
MERCY, O KING! YOU HAVE WON.
AND IN A FAIR BOUT. LEAVE MY KINGDOM AND DON'T DARE COME HERE AGAIN!
THIS IS THE VERY MAN, THE POTTER, WHO IS DESTINED TO DEFEAT KING VIKRAMADITYA.

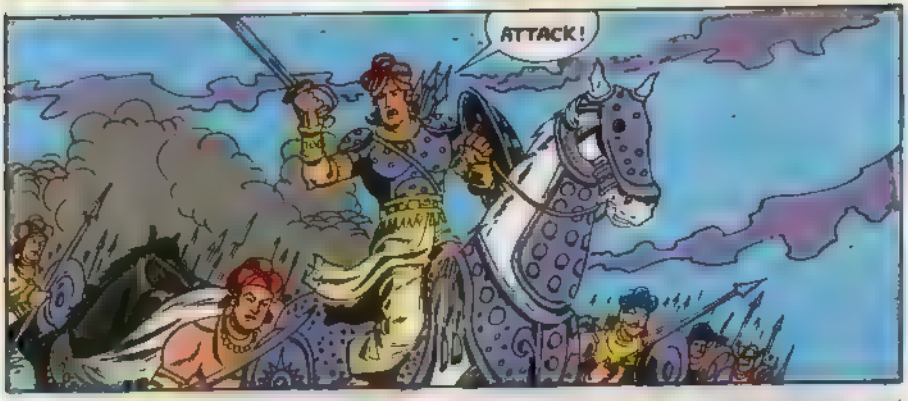

THE VETALA RETURNED TO VIKRAMADITYA'S COURT.
I HAVE FOUND THE POTTER. HE IS NONE OTHER THAN KING SHALIVAHANA. BUT I COULD NOT KILL HIM. HE DEFEATED ME IN A FAIR FIGHT.
DEFEATED YOU? THEN I MUST VANQUISH HIM!

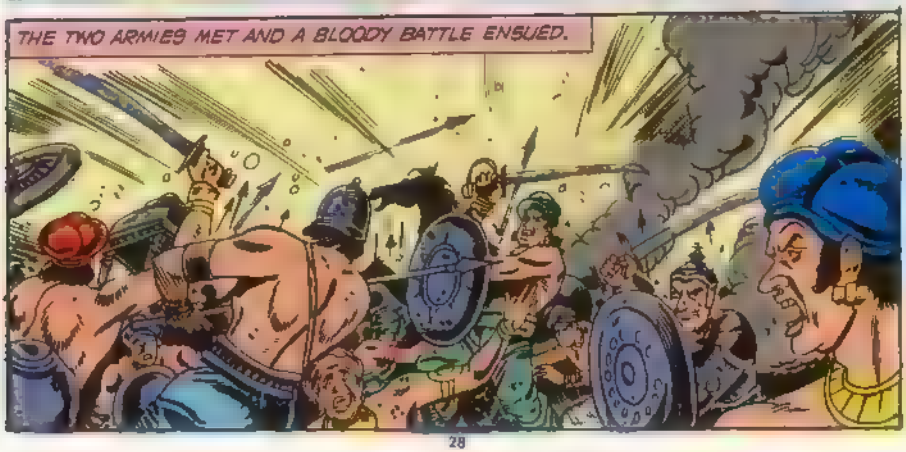
WHEN NEWS OF VIKRAMADITYA'S IMPENDING ATTACK REACHED PRATISHTHANA—
PREPARE TO GIVE BATTLE. HE IS A MIGHTY FOE.
NOT TOO MIGHTY FOR US, YOUR MAJESTY!


BEFORE LEAVING, SHALIVAHANA WENT TO SEEK HIS MOTHER'S BLESSINGS.
VICTORY SHALL BE YOURS.

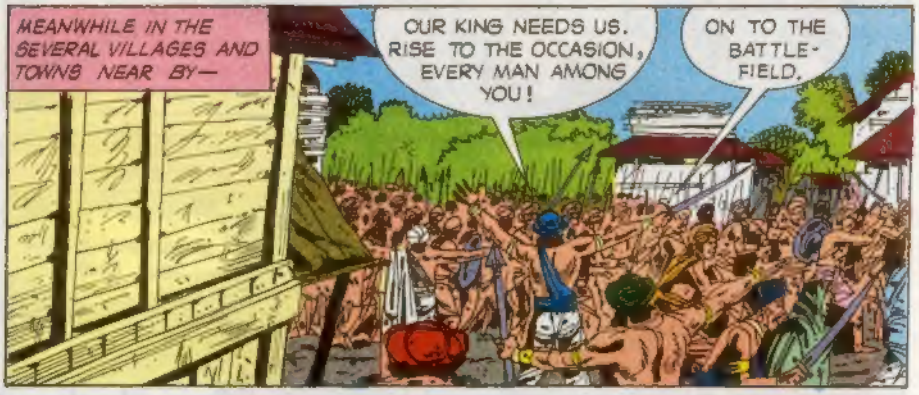

AT THE HEAD OF HIS COMPARATIVELY SMALL ARMY, SHALIVAHANA MARCHED FORTH TO FACE THE MIGHTY VIKRAMADITYA AND HIS VAST ARMIES.


SOON, THE TWO ARMIES STOOD FACE TO FACE. VIKRAMADITYA TOOK ONE LOOK AT THE FORCES OF HIS ENEMY.
SO THAT'S THE KING AND THAT HIS ARMY! HA! HA! THEY DO FRIGHTEN ME!
SHALIVAHANA HAS INVITED HIS DOOM.


ATTACK!


THE TWO ARMIES MET AND A BLOODY BATTLE ENSUED.

MY MEN ARE FALLING ONE BY ONE. WHAT SHALL WE DO?


MEANWHILE IN THE SEVERAL VILLAGES AND TOWNS NEAR BY—
OUR KING NEEDS US. RISE TO THE OCCASION, EVERY MAN AMONG YOU!
ON TO THE BATTLE-FIELD.

MEN MARCHED TO THE BATTLE-FIELD FROM EVERY DIRECTION.
GLORY TO KING SHALIVAHANA!
VICTORY SHALL BE OURS.

LOOK! MY LORD! MORE OF THEM!
WE HAVE UNDER-ESTIMATED HIS STRENGTH!

WHERE HAVE THEY COME FROM?

WHILE SHALIVAHANA WAS PUZZLED, VIKRAMADITYA WAS DISMAYED.
SHALIVAHANA IS A SLY ONE!

VIKRAMADITYA'S FORCES STARTED RETREATING.
WHERE DID OUR KING SHALIVAHANA POST ALL THESE FORCES? AND THOSE WAR ANIMALS?
I CANNOT BUT BELIEVE THAT THE IMAGES HE MADE AS A CHILD HAVE COME TO LIFE TO AID HIM.

AT LAST VIKRAMADITYA FELL.
LONG LIVE SHALIVAHANA!
LONG LIVE THE KING OF KINGS!

AT UJJAYINI, AS SHALIVAHANA ASCENDED THE THRONE OF VIKRAMADITYA—
TO COMMEMORATE OUR GREAT VICTORY, THIS DAY SHALL MARK THE COMMENCEMENT OF A NEW ERA— SHALIVAHANA SHAKA*
THE DAY SHALIVAHANA, THE SON OF A DESTITUTE WIDOW, BECAME THE EMPEROR OF UJJAYINI, IS OBSERVED AS NEW YEAR'S DAY, TO THIS DAY IN MAHARASHTRA, KARNATAKA AND OTHER PARTS OF INDIA.

* ERA

Illustrated Classics From India

Shalivahana

King Shalivahana is credited with the introduction of a new era named after him, and referred to as the Shalivahana Shaka. It was initiated to commemorate his magnificent victory over Vikramaditya of Ujjaini in 78 AD. Even today, Hindus use the Shalivahana Shaka to record births, marriages and other auspicious events.

The Vikrama Charita, a Sanskrit classic composed in the 11th century, supports this view. Apart from this work and a few popular legends, there is no concrete evidence to support this theory. Brought up as a potter, the brave and good Shalivahana was destined to become a great king, and this prophecy was well fulfilled.

History records that Gautami's son Shatakarni of the Shatavahana dynasty, defeated the powerful King Nahapana of the Satraps. The folklore of Maharashtra identifies the same Shatakarni with Shalivahana.

The content for this Amar Chitra Katha title is derived from the Sanskrit classic Kathasaritsagara and Vikrama Charita, as well as from popular folk tales on this legendary hero.

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